

January 19, 2012

The Honorable Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC, 20590-9898

Dear Secretary LaHood:

As the Department of Transportation prepares to implement the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Test Range provisions in the recently passed National Defense Authorization Act and the FAA Reauthorization bill, we encourage you to establish a Mid-Atlantic UAS Test Range in the Maryland–Virginia region to leverage our UAS facilities, airspace and talent.

We would like to highlight a few critical points. First, Maryland and Virginia have joined together in this effort because we realize no single installation or region can do what we can do together. We offer thousands of square miles of restricted and special-use airspace and modern UAS infrastructure at the Atlantic Test Range, NASA Wallops Flight Facility, NASA Langley Research Center, and Naval Air Station Patuxent River. Our airspace exists today and does not need to be created. Nearly every UAS operated by the United States Government has been flown in and tested from our flight test facilities.

Second, provisions in both bills direct the FAA to take on the challenging task of integrating UAS into the national air space almost immediately and without an accompanying Congressional appropriation. We urge you to consider the use of the DoD, NASA, industry and academic institutions in our states that will provide the FAA with a solution at no cost to the taxpayer. Today's budget reality demands a smarter way of doing business. We urge you to take advantage of Virginia and Maryland's existing infrastructure and capabilities, which are ready for operations today and able to provide a savings for the taxpayer and relieve some pressure on the Federal budget.

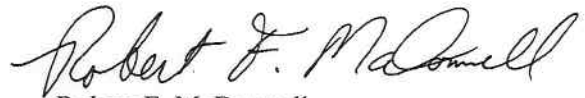
Finally, a UAS Test Range based in the MD-VA region offers the FAA the lowest risk and highest value proposition. Industry, academia and Federal agencies in Maryland and Virginia design, test and operate every category of UAS. Facilities in both states have extensive experience integrating UAS into the national air space. Our states have the capability to be the center of gravity for UAS operations. Our workforce offers the ability to complete the UAS integration task with the right people and a flat learning curve while having the finest UAS infrastructure in the nation at their disposal.

We look forward to discussing this important endeavor with you and commend you for your leadership on this vitally important task.

Sincerely,



Martin O'Malley
Governor



Robert F. McDonnell
Governor